

The Parables of Jesus

10 days of in-depth study of the
parables



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Introduction

I have always had a fascination with the parables. I am more of a “get to the point” person, so I have always wondered why Jesus chose to teach in such an unconventional way.

The parables of Jesus are found in the synoptic gospels (the first three books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.) There are no parables in the gospel of John. A large percentage of the parables are found in multiple books of the synoptic gospels, and so I will be providing all the places that the parable is found. You can read just one of the versions, or all of them, that is your choice. I would recommend that if you have different translations of the bible, or you have a bible app, that you read the parables in at least three different translations. I believe this gives you a better overall understanding of the language and the meaning of the text.

The purpose of the parables was to focus the listener on the character of God:

- What God is like
- How God works
- How God loves us
- What God expects from his followers

Many of the people listening to Jesus at the time of his teaching were confused by these parables. This, I have discovered, was very intentional. Jesus wanted to draw those who were truly seeking him, while repelling others that were not willing to listen or believe.

For those who are willing to seek him, you will find him. God’s nature is revealed for those who diligently search beyond the mystery of the parable to discover its meaning.

After reading each parable, you will see a Verse Map. Each Verse Map allows you to outline and break down the parable into its most important or key aspects. There is also a space for you to apply the parable to your own life and situations, and a place for you to draw conclusions about each parable.

I pray you find this study will broaden your understanding of the glorious mystery of Christ’s teachings and all he wants you to learn from them.

Blessings as you explore His Word,
Susie

The Sower

Matthew 13: 3-23; Mark 4:3-20

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn’t have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

His disciples came and asked him, “Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?”

He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. That is why I use these parables,

For they look, but they don’t really see.

They hear, but they don’t really listen or understand.

This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says,

“When you hear what I say; you will not understand.

When you see what I do,

You will not comprehend

For the hearts of these people are hardened,

And their ears cannot hear,

And they have closed their eyes—

So their eyes cannot see,

And their ears cannot hear,

And their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me

And let me heal them.

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it.”

“Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don’t understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts.

The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word.

The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.

The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted.



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New Cloth on an Old Garment

Matthew 9: 16-17; Mark 2:21-22

“Besides, who would patch old clothing new new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling wine and ruining the skins. New wine is store in new wineskins so that both are preserved.”

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The Good Samaritan

Luke: 10:29-37

“A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

By chance, a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed on the other side.

Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, “Take care of this man. If his bills run higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.”

Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

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The Unforgiving Debtor

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?”

“No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”

Therefore the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.”

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The Evil Farmers

Mark 12: 1-11

“A man planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country.

At the time of the grape harvest, he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the crop. But the farmers grabbed the servant, beat him up, and sent him back empty-handed.

The owner then sent another servant, but they insulted him and beat him over the head. The next servant he sent was killed.

Others he sent were either beaten or killed until there was only one left —his son whom he loved dearly. The owner finally sent him, thinking, ‘Surely they will respect my son.’

But the tenant farmers said to one another, ‘Here comes the heir to this estate. Let’s kill him and get the estate for ourselves!’ So they grabbed him and murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard.

What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do?” Jesus asked. “I’ll tell you—he will come and kill those farmers and lease the vineyard to others. Didn’t you ever read this in the Scriptures?

**The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.
This is the Lord’s doing
and it is wonderful to see.”**



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The Friend at Midnight

Luke 11: 5-13

“Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.’ And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can’t help you.’

But I tell you this—though he won’t do it for friendship’s sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.

And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

You fathers—if your child asks for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

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The Ten Bridesmaids

Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps, but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight they were roused by the shout, 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!'

All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. Then the five foolish ones asked the others, 'Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.'

But the others replied, 'We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.'

But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside calling, 'Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!'

But he called back, 'Believe me, I don't know you.'

So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.”



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The Rich Fool

Luke: 13-21

Then someone called from the crowd, “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father’s estate with me.”

Jesus replied, “Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?” Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.”

Then he told them a story: “A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I’ll sit back and say to myself, “My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!”

But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’

Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.”

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The Heart of Man

Matthew 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-23

Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand, It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.”

Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?”

Jesus replied, “Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted, so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Explain to us the parable that says people aren’t defiled by what they eat,”

“Don’t you understand yet?” Jesus asked. “Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”

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The Lost Sheep

Matthew 18: 12-14; Luke 15: 4-7

“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he will rejoice over it more than over the ninety-nine that didn’t wander away! In the same way, it is not my heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish.”



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